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How to Be a President.

Some sober and objective reflections on the exact manner in which the President managed his tour de force concerning Vietnam seem only proper.

Whatever the outcome concerning an end of the Vietnam fighting, this has been one of the most skillful exercises in executing a difficult and complex strategy made by an American president.

First, it is instructive to refer to the old nine-days wonder, the Pentagon Papers, which are a mine of information. In that study, a memorandum of May 24, 1967, from Undersecretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach went on the record. He suggested (as one alternative to the course of action then being proposed by the military) that bombing of North Vietnam be either limited or stopped, and that a request for 200,000 more troops be held down to 10,000.

The CIA backed the acceptability of such a new alternative for President Johnson's consideration with an estimate that an intensified air attack "would confront the Soviets with difficult choices, although the CIA expected that in the end the Soviets would avoid a direct confrontation with the U. S. and would simply step up their support through China."

This CIA memo was reported in the Pentagon Papers as stating that mining North Vietnamese ports "... would put China in a commanding political position, since it would have control over the remaining supply lines to North Vietnam."

This flurry of May notes came in response to a visit to President Johnson in Washington on April 27, 1967, by General William C. Westmoreland, who, the papers say, requested these things:

— Continued and intensified bombing.

— Closing of North Vietnamese ports.

— Additional troops to extend the war into Cambodian and Laotian sanctuaries.

— "... possible invasion of North Vietnam. We may wish to take offensive action against the (north) with ground troops."

We know how that all turned out. Indeed, the Pentagon Papers state that after hearing General Westmoreland "... the President remained skeptical to say the least." They noted that when the general spoke to Congress the next day, "he mentioned the bombing only in passing as a reprisal for VC terror and depredation in the south."

Now consider President Nixon's careful preparation.

There have been warnings since January of a North Vietnamese buildup for some kind of conventional attack on the South. (A typical analysis printed in *The Enquirer* in February flatly stated it would involve armor and accurately predicted the specific points of attack and the objectives if it were attempted.)

President Nixon opened new and dramatic relations with Red China.

He pushed a diplomatic offensive in Europe which made it imperative to the Soviets that the hoped-for results, of mutual great advantage, wouldn't be jeopardized by other events.

He then ordered intense bombing of the North, of the kind advocated by our military in 1967, and mined the harbors, as advocated by our military in 1967.

Russia can hardly achieve great cooperation from China in supporting Hanoi through

that country's transport system, given the present situation.

Since the Soviets themselves seemed to have been the great authors and subsidizing power for the North Vietnamese Easter offensive, what difference did it make, except to our advantage, if Hanoi became a Peking dependency? The President had already prepared for that eventuality with the greatest of skill.

Reaction from Hanoi and Moscow was less vehement than from doves in the United States Senate. The President of the United States had moved first and prepared his diplomatic battleground. Russia and China had too much to lose to make a crisis out of it.

Revisiting the Pentagon Papers and reviewing the most recent developments in the Indochina War can only bring these conclusions: — Lyndon B. Johnson took the wrong advice, took the counsel of fear, and thereby allowed a war to drag on which his soldiers, airmen and sailors were asking to be allowed to win for him five years ago.

— Richard M. Nixon rescued a situation by using the tools of a 1967 victory to obtain a 1972 respite. More than that was denied him by changed circumstances. What he did, and how he did it, however, should make his pursuit of an end to Vietnam a textbook example of how to be a president.